MEREDITH FINCH • IG GUARA

ROSE™

THE FUTURE OF COMICS 25 image EST. 1992

#3

The Story So Far...

In the land of Ttereve, magical ability is a death sentence. Rose's village is destroyed and her mother killed when Queen Drucilla senses the emergence of a new magical power in her kingdom. Convinced that the queen is behind her loss, Rose embarks on a quest for vengeance and soon encounters of a band of rebels with their own agenda. Impatient with what she perceives as an unwillingness on the part of the rebels to hold the men who killed her mother accountable, Rose sets off on her own to seek her revenge. Only a timely intervention by the rebel Will prevents Rose's impulsive action from becoming a suicide mission.

On their way back to join the others, Rose's true nature begins to reveal itself. This causes Will to question whether Rose is actually a victim or posing as one to spy for Drucilla, but his interrogation of our heroine is interrupted by the appearance of one of the Fallen.

Chapter two ends with the awakening of the last of the khatz, Thorne. Will he connect with his guardian, Rose, in time or become one of the Fallen? Find out now in this next exciting chapter of ROSE.

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10 YEARS AGO.
I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU, FELIX, BUT I WON'T WARN YOU AGAIN!
THERE'S A WAR GOING ON OUT THERE AND YOUR PEOPLE NEED YOU. NOW LEAVE, BEFORE YOU DO SOMETHING WE'LL BOTH REGRET!
THIS IS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, THORNE!
I SAID... LEAVE!
NO!!
DRUCILLA AND HER FORCES ARE SLAUGHTERING US AND THERE ISN'T A DAMNED THING I CAN DO TO STOP IT.
YOU ARE THE LAST OF THE KHATZ.
I REFUSE TO LET YOU HIDE YOURSELF AWAY.

FELIX, STOP! I'M A KHAT WITHOUT A GUARDIAN. I CAN'T ACCESS THE POWER OF THE LAND TO HELP YOU.
CLANG
AND DRUCILLA'S CALL TO ME GROWS STRONGER WITH EACH DAY. IF SHE BONDS WITH ME--USES MY POWER--THE POWER OF A KHAT--SHE WILL BE UNSTOPPABLE!
BETTER CHAINS OF MY OWN CHOOSING, THAN THE ONES SHE WOULD PUT ON ME.
YOU CAN'T GIVE UP THIS EASILY. I WON'T LET YOU!
YOU CAN RESIST HER. WE'LL FIND YOUR DAMNED GUARDIAN. NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES...
YOUR KINGDOM IS BURNING, FELIX. OUR TIME...MY TIME IS UP.

AND WHAT HAPPENS TO US... TO YOUR GUARDIAN, IF YOU DO THIS?
LEGENDS SAY THAT THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, WHEN PEACE RULED THE LAND, KHATZ BECAME LIVING STATUES UNTIL THEY WERE NEEDED ONCE AGAIN.
I HOPE THAT WHEN MY GUARDIAN IS READY...I WILL BE AWAKENED BY HIS POWER.
BUT I DON'T KNOW FOR CERTAIN. THIS HAS NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE.
AND WHAT IF THERE IS NO GUARDIAN? OR WHAT IF HE'S NEVER READY? YOU'LL BE TRAPPED. FOREVER!
THAT IS A CHANCE I AM WILLING TO TAKE. BETTER THAT THAN BE USED AGAINST THE PEOPLE I LOVE.
DIDN'T YOU ONCE TELL ME THAT SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO SACRIFICE A BATTLE TO WIN THE WAR?
DON'T THROW MY WORDS BACK AT ME, THORNE. NOT NOW.
IS THERE NOTHING I CAN SAY TO TALK YOU OUT OF THIS?
I'M SORRY.
SO AM I, OLD FRIEND. SO AM I.

NOW.
I WAS RIGHT, FELIX.
I CAN FEEL MY GUARDIAN...
WHUD
...THE VOICE... THE TOUCH...
BUT... THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE...
...I CAN TASTE IT IN THE AIR...A SORROW DEEPER THAN ANYTHING I HAVE EVER KNOWN.
WHERE ARE YOU, MY FRIEND?
WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OUR HOME?

FINALLY! HE HAS RETURNED.
...IT'S ALL AROUND ME...A SENSE OF INCONSOLABLE LOSS...
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU MANAGED TO DISAPPEAR ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...
THOOM
...THORNE...
AVAN!!
ROWR
....BUT YOU WILL NOT GET AWAY THIS TIME.

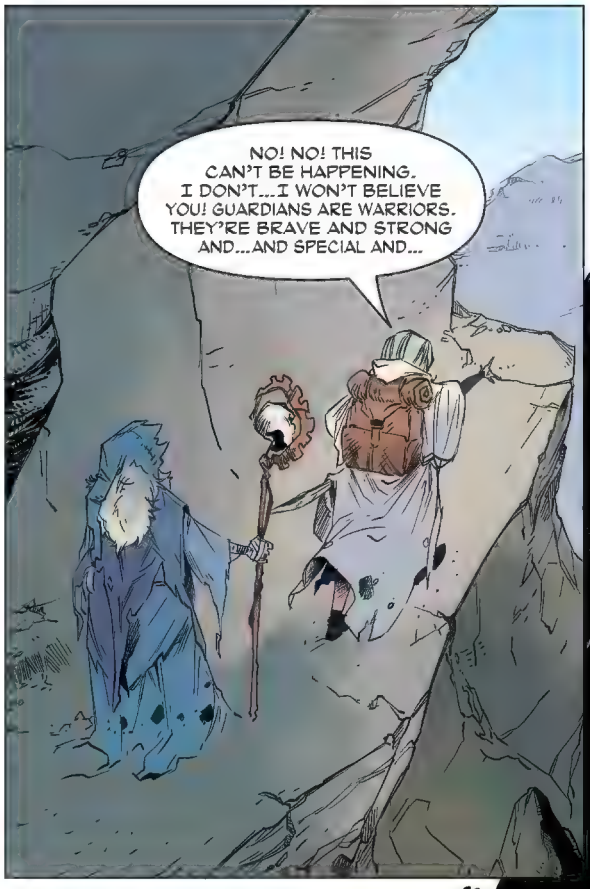
I TOLD YOU ALREADY, ILA. I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.
A LIGHT APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE AND THEN THE CREATURE LOOKED OFF TOWARD THE MOUNTAINS AND RAN AWAY.
ENOUGH!
HEY!
I AM OLD, BUT I AM NOT A FOOL!
WILL TOLD ME WHAT REALLY HAPPENED...THAT THE LIGHT CAME FROM YOU. THAT YOU SAVED HIM.
ILA. PLEASE!
I WILL NOT BE LIED TO...
...UHHHHHUHHHH...
ILA, NO!

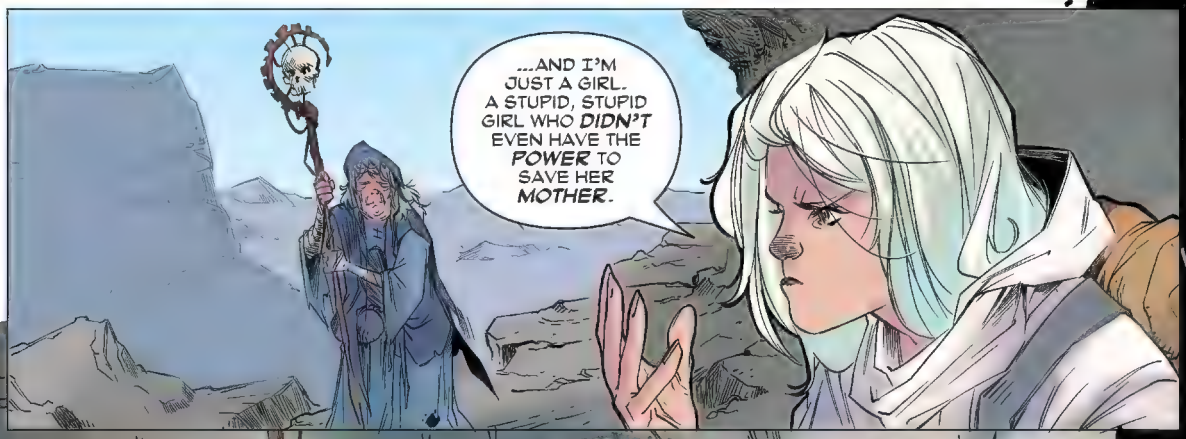
THAT IS BETTER.
DID YOU...? YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE?!
IT IS TIME, ROSE.
I KNEW WHAT YOU WERE THE MINUTE I SAW YOU. HOW ELSE WOULD YOU HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SURVIVE THE RAID ON YOUR VILLAGE?

NOW WITH YOU--WITH A GUARDIAN-- WE FINALLY HAVE A CHANCE TO DEFEAT DRUCILLA.
WHAT ARE YOU SAY--NO! THERE'S NO WAY I'M...
...I CAN'T BE.

WE DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR YOU TO DENY WHAT WE BOTH KNOW TO BE TRUE!
DRUCILLA NEEDS TO BE STOPPED BEFORE SHE DESTROYS WHAT IS LEFT OF OUR LAND.

WHEN THE POWER OF A GUARDIAN FULLY MANIFESTS, THEIR HAIR TURNS WHITE, JUST AS YOURS NOW HAS.
MY HAI...?!


NO! NO! THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING. I DON'T...I WON'T BELIEVE YOU! GUARDIANS ARE WARRIORS. THEY'RE BRAVE AND STRONG AND...AND SPECIAL AND...


...AND I'M JUST A GIRL. A STUPID, STUPID GIRL WHO *DIDN'T* EVEN HAVE THE *POWER* TO SAVE HER *MOTHER*.

COME HERE, ROSE. I THINK IT IS TIME I TOLD YOU MY STORY.

"BEFORE THE WAR AND BEFORE THE KHATZ DISAPPEARED, I WAS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE PERSON YOU SEE BEFORE YOU.
"I HAD A BEAUTIFUL FAMILY THAT I LOVED.
"ALL I EVER WANTED WAS TO TAKE CARE OF THEM AND MAKE THEM HAPPY.
"AND THEN THE FIGHTING BEGAN.
"I LOST ALL THREE OF MY BOYS IN THE WAR. AND MY HUSBAND TO THE HEARTACHE THAT FOLLOWED.
"I DID NOT THINK IT COULD GET ANY WORSE.
"BUT THEN GRIER... MY PRECIOUS GRANDSON... MY BEAUTIFUL GRIER BEGAN TO SHOW THE SIGNS OF BECOMING A GUARDIAN."

WHAT HAPPENED?
"I DID EVERYTHING I COULD TO HIDE HIM...
"...BUT IT WAS NOT ENOUGH.
"I HATED MYSELF FOR A VERY LONG TIME, BELIEVING THAT IT WAS MY FAULT. THAT I SHOULD HAVE DONE MORE TO PROTECT HIM.
"I WANTED TO DIE."
BUT I FINALLY REALIZED SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT, ROSE. GRIER'S DEATH WASN'T MY FAULT. THERE WAS NOTHING MORE I COULD HAVE DONE TO PROTECT HIM. THE REAL VILLAIN WAS DRUCILLA.
SINCE THAT DAY, I HAVE DEVOTED MYSELF TO THE RESISTANCE AND FINDING A WAY TO STOP HER FROM DESTROYING EVERYTHING THAT IS GOOD AND BEAUTIFUL IN OUR LAND.
DON'T LET YOUR MOTHER'S DEATH--DON'T LET GRIER'S DEATH--BE FOR NOTHING.

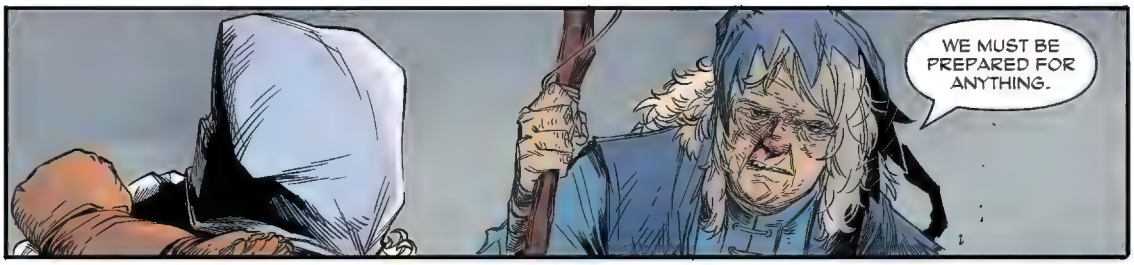
"I DON'T KNOW, ILA. ALL MY LIFE I'VE HEARD STORIES OF THE GUARDIANS AND THEIR GREAT KHATZ."
IT'S JUST... I NEVER DREAMED... THAT I COULD BE ONE OF THEM.
YOU DO NOT NEED TO HIDE ANYMORE, ROSE.
"...TO TAKE A LEAP OF FAITH."
ROSE!
...TO TRUST YOURSELF AND YOUR POWER....
"IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO EMBRACE YOUR DESTINY..."

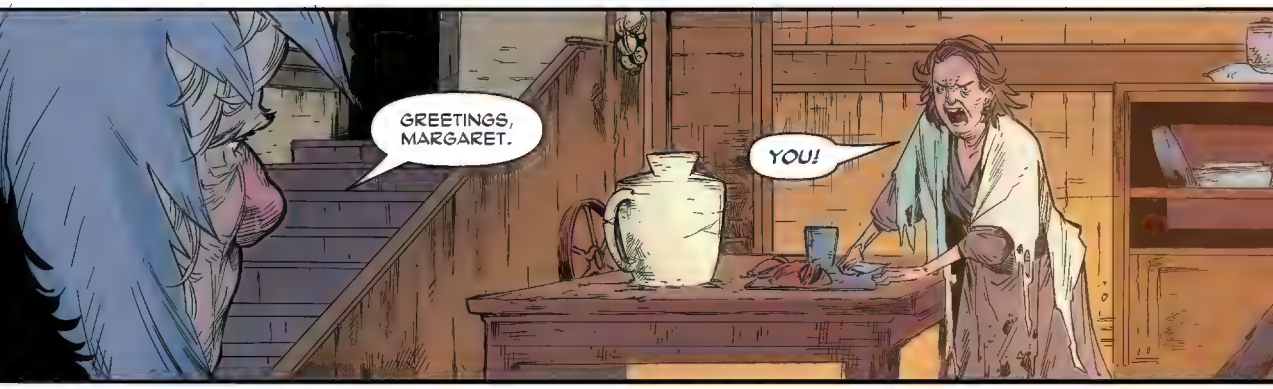
BUT HOW DO I...?
THORNE?
WHAT IS IT?!
I...I DON'T KNOW. I THOUGHT I HEARD... NO...I *FELT*...SOMEONE CALLING ME.
I HAD ALMOST GIVEN UP HOPE, BUT WHEN I SAW WHAT YOU WERE, I KNEW THAT AT LEAST ONE HAD SURVIVED. YOUR KHAT. HE IS TRYING TO FIND YOU.
COME! WE MUST GET TO THE COUNCIL QUICKLY. IT IS BEYOND ME TO TEACH YOU HOW TO DEVELOP THIS BOND.
WE MUST HOPE THAT THERE ARE THOSE AMONG US WHO STILL REMEMBER.
ROSE?
...I'M ...COMING.

STRANGE.
NOTHING SHOULD BE GROWING HERE SO SOON AFTER A FIRE.
LOOKS LIKE I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE HUNTING OUR LITTLE MAGIC USER.
WHAT HAVE WE HERE?
BUT, WILL. YOU AIN'T WELL ENOUGH TO TRAVEL YET.
ILA SAID WE WAS TO WAIT FOR BJARKE.
ROSE... SHE NEEDS ME...
IF THE QUEEN FINDS OUT SHE HAS MAGIC...
NO! WE'RE GOING. NOW.
GOOD. I'D HATE TO WAIT.

MILLHAVEN
OUR SECRECY IS WHAT HAS KEPT US SAFE ALL THESE YEARS, BUT THE QUEEN HAS SPIES EVERYWHERE. WE MUST BE CAREFUL.
AHHHH.
ROSE?
I'M SORRY. I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT JUST HAPPENED. IT WAS THE STRANGEST THING...I JUST SUDDENLY FELT LIKE I WAS FALLING.
YOUR CONNECTION TO YOUR KHAT APPEARS TO BE GETTING STRONGER. WE MUST HURRY.

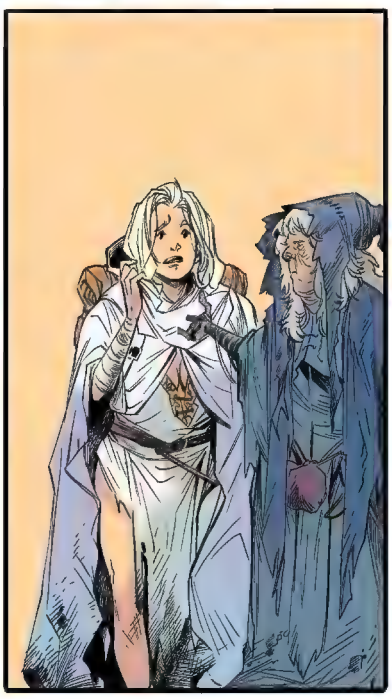
I FEAR THAT OUR SAFETY HAS MADE US COMPLACENT.
EVEN WITH PROOF OF WHO AND WHAT YOU ARE, THE COUNCIL WILL BE RELUCTANT TO MOVE AGAINST DRUCILLA.

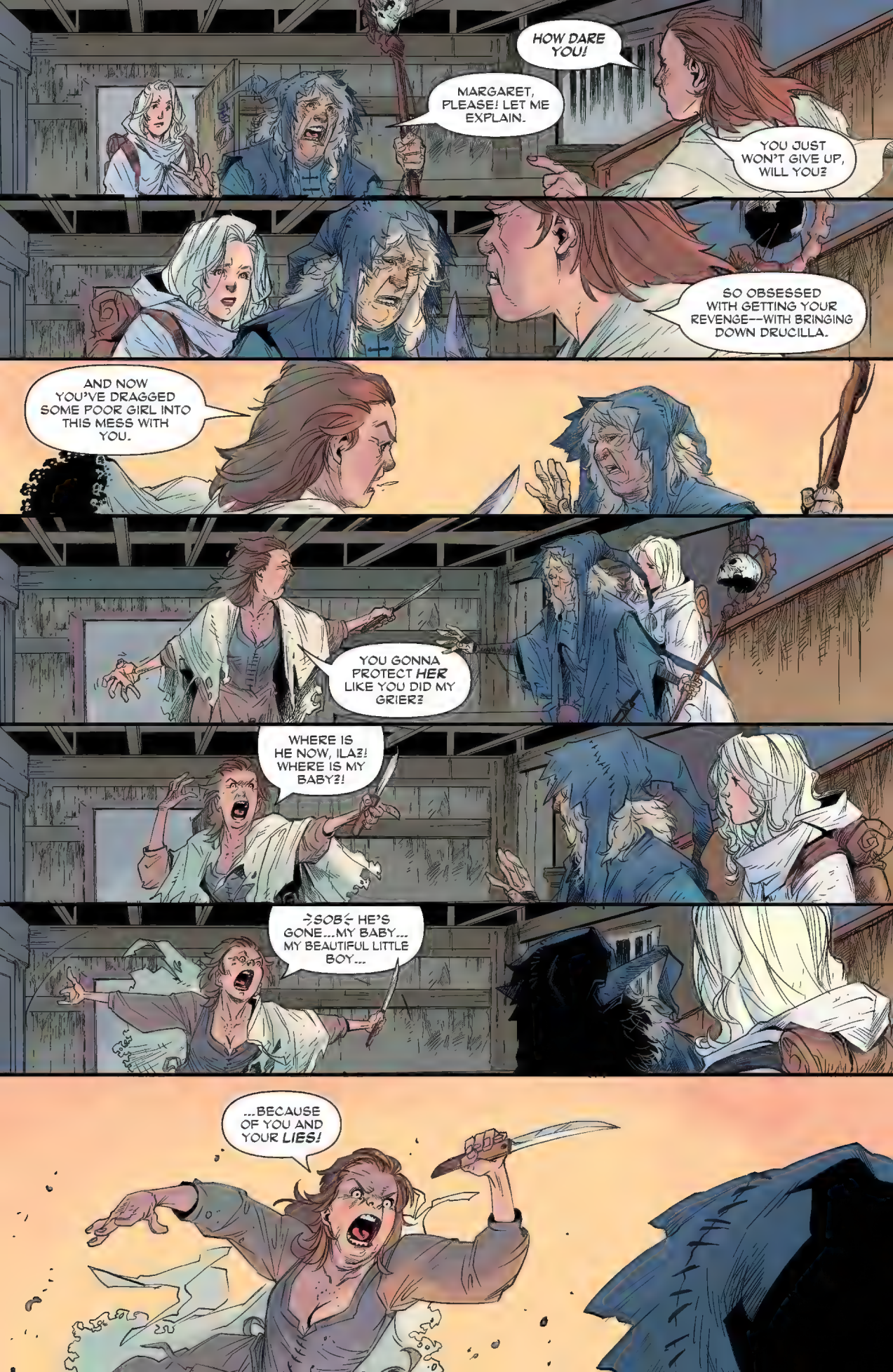

WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING.


GREETINGS, MARGARET.
YOU!

YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF NERVE COMING HERE, ILA.

MARGARET. THIS IS ROSE.



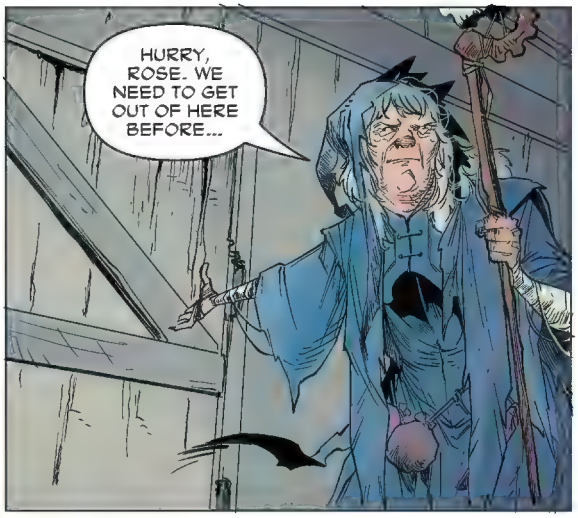

HOW DARE YOU!
MARGARET, PLEASE! LET ME EXPLAIN.
YOU JUST WON'T GIVE UP, WILL YOU?
SO OBSESSED WITH GETTING YOUR REVENGE--WITH BRINGING DOWN DRUCILLA.
AND NOW YOU'VE DRAGGED SOME POOR GIRL INTO THIS MESS WITH YOU.
YOU GONNA PROTECT HER LIKE YOU DID MY GRIER?
WHERE IS HE NOW, ILA?! WHERE IS MY BABY?!
~SOB~ HE'S GONE...MY BABY... MY BEAUTIFUL LITTLE BOY...
...BECAUSE OF YOU AND YOUR LIES!

NO!
...SHE HAD A KNIFE...SHE WAS GOING TO...I... I DIDN'T MEAN IT!
SHE WILL BE FINE, ROSE. SHE IS ONLY STUNNED. YOU DID NOT HURT HER.
IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT YOUR POWER SEEMS TO BE TRIGGERED BY A NEED TO PROTECT OTHERS.
BUT THAT IS A CONVERSATION FOR ANOTHER TIME.
COME. WE MUST HURRY. BEFORE MARGARET WAKES UP...

FEEL FREE TO LOOK AROUND, ROSE, AND TAKE WHATEVER YOU THINK YOU MIGHT NEED.
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
MARGARET WAS RIGHT. I HAVE SPENT YEARS PREPARING...
...STOCKPILING WEAPONS AND SUPPLIES FOR THE DAY THAT WE WOULD FIND THE STRENGTH TO RISE UP AGAINST DRUCILLA.
PREPARING FOR THE RETURN OF THE GUARDIANS.
PREPARING FOR YOU.
IT HAS TO BE HERE SOMEWHERE!
AH, YES!
WHAT ON EARTH?

YOU SAID I SHOULD TAKE WHATEVER I THINK I MIGHT NEED.
IT'S JUST... I THOUGHT...IF I'M GOING TO TRY TO SAVE THE WORLD...
IT'S TOO MUCH, RIGHT?
IT IS PERFECT.

AT THE COUNCIL TONIGHT, IT MIGHT BE BETTER IF YOU LET ME DO THE TALKING.
MARGARET... SHE'S GONE.


HURRY, ROSE. WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE...

BAM

YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
NEXT MONTH: AN UNLIKELY ALLY.

NEXT MONTH

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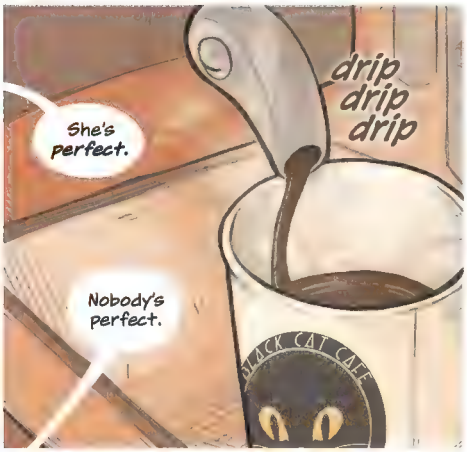
Grace Ellis Shae Beagle
Moonstruck
McCubbin Quirk Combs
SELENA
Sneak Preview

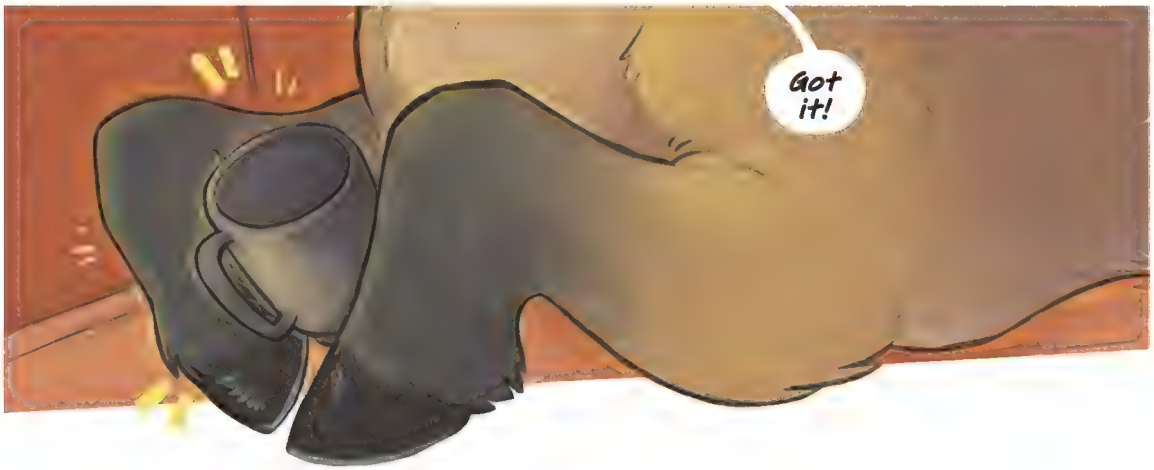

drip drip drip
She's perfect.
Nobody's perfect.
BLACK CAT CAFE

KSHHHHHH
I'm telling you, this girl is. She's so smart and cute and funny and nice!
You've been on one date!

SHOOOP
She even loves the Pleasant Mountain Sisters books!
Ok, now that is definitely a sign.

I have a double-shot cappuccino at the bar for Janis!
Hey, can you hand me a clean mug, please?

Oh no! Sorry!


Got it!

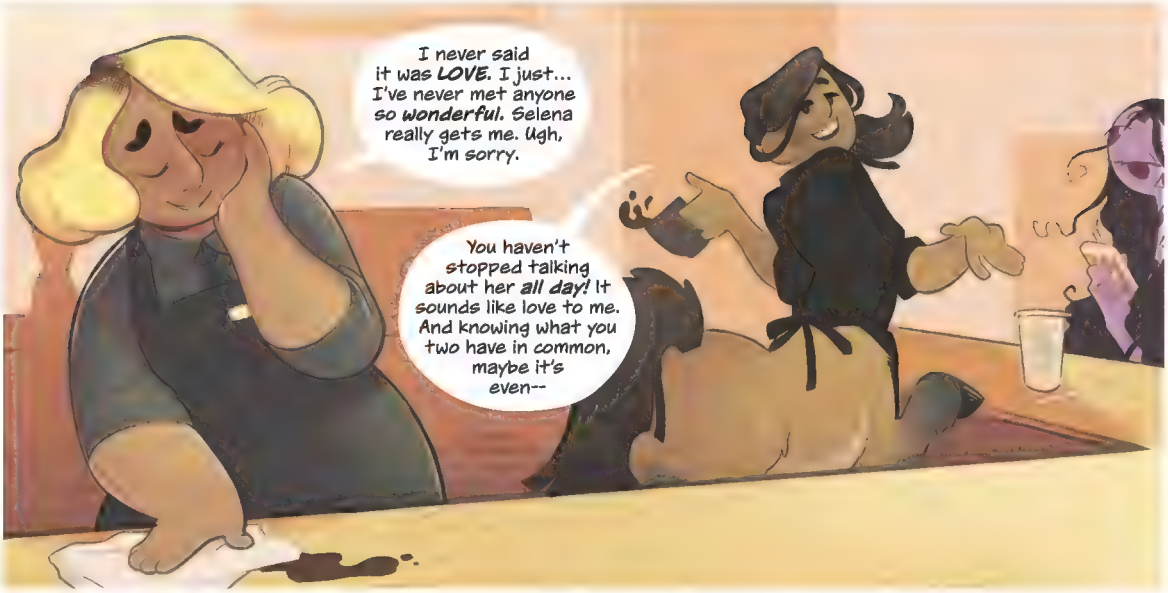
BLACK CAT

We are a well-oiled machine, baby! **Woo!**

The dynamic duo is on **fire** today!

Ugh, they **always** spell my name wrong.

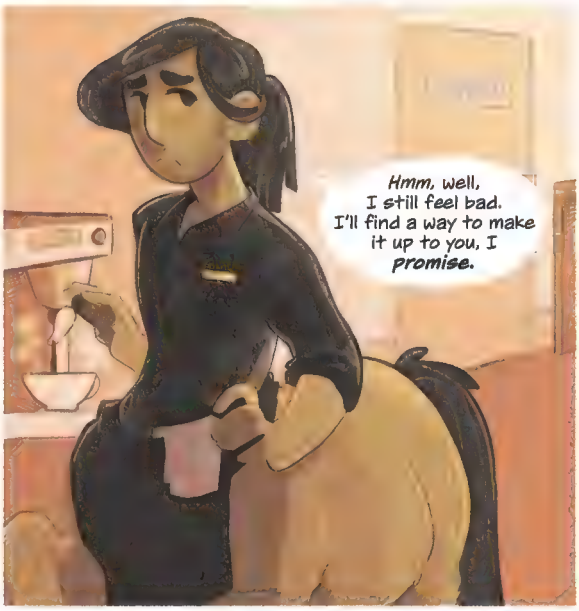
I'm sure it won't be the last time.


I never said it was LOVE. I just... I've never met anyone so wonderful. Selena really gets me. Ugh, I'm sorry.
You haven't stopped talking about her all day! It sounds like love to me. And knowing what you two have in common, maybe it's even--

Please don't say it.
Puppy love!

I'm taking my ten.
Aww, no wait, come back! I'm sorry, that was insensitive.

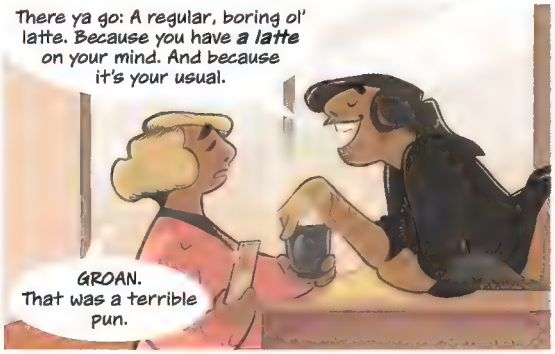
Oh no, it's fine, I'm sorry. I just want some fresh air.


Hmm, well, I still feel bad. I'll find a way to make it up to you, I promise.

Whatcha reading today?
Pleasant Mountain Sisters Super-Solver Mystery #29: Barking Up The Wrong Tree.
Ah yes, that American literature classic.

#29
PLEASANT MOUNTAIN SISTERS
SUPER-SOLVER MYSTERY
BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE
BETSY BUXTON
I'm gonna regret asking this, but how many times have you read that?

A bunch of times, but it's Selena's favorite in the series.
Besides, if I'm ever going to take over as a ghostwriter, I have to know them all backwards and forwards.
Even the ones I don't like as much.
But if Selena likes it, then maybe I missed something amazing the first times I read it.


There ya go: A regular, boring ol' latte. Because you have a latte on your mind. And because it's your usual.
GROAN. That was a terrible pun.

My gender identity today is terrible puns. I gotta be me.

I'll be back soon!
I just want you to espresso your feelings!
Bye, Chet!
Ok bye I love you be safe make good choices don't talk to strangers unless they look like my type!

... to be continued in MOONSTRUCK #1 coming in JULY from IMAGE COMICS.

VELVET DEADLY CLASS THE FUSE
LAZARUS EAST OF WEST I KILL GIANTS
THE WALKING DEAD I HATE FAIRYLAND
KING CITY SEX CRIMINALS
COPPERHEAD
THE HUMANS RATQUEENS
SOUTHERN BASTARDS SPAWN ORIGINS THE WICKED + THE DIVINE
MONSTRESS CHEW SPREAD
NOWHERE MEN
HOWTOONS THEY'RE NOT LIKE US SUNSTONE MANIFEST DESTINY
DESCENDER PAPER GIRLS
OCTOPUS PIE WYTCHES SHUTTER
TOKYO GHOST THE MANHATTAN PROJECTS BITCH PLANET
CHRONONAUTS WAYWARD
SAGA THE AUTUMNLANDS TREES
CRIMINAL
PLUTONA LOW
REVIVAL NAILBITER
CAMP MIDNIGHT
RUMBLE ODDLY NORMAL
HINGES
BLACK SCIENCE
PRETTY DEADLY
THE FADE OUT

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LEE LOUGHRIDGE

THE AWARD-WINNING TRILOGY
COLLECTED INTO TRADE PAPERBACK

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